The Perception of Emotional Speech of Russian Children by Native French Speakers

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This paper seeks to answer a question how native French speakers perceive emotional speech of Russian children and to find out whether there are universal and specific patterns in perception of emotional speech in an unfamiliar language. For this purpose, the perceiving experiment was carried out using the corpora of Russian Emotional Children Speech. All recordings of children’s speech were cut into short chunks and presented to auditors. The participants of the experiment were adult native French speakers currently living in France. They do not know Russian and do not have children. It means that there was no lexical or motherhood/fatherhood experience support and all listeners relied only on their hearing. The experiment was aimed to find out how many chunks with emotional speech would be recognized correctly when the listeners rely only on prosody while segmental level of information is not present. In the end of the experiment the similar and different patterns of assessing emotions in children’s speech were revealed. This study will help to understand better the nature of emotions’ perception while a lexical and segmental levels are still unknown. Despite the linguistic nature of this research, the results could be used in speech synthesis or machine recognition of emotional speech.

Keywords: emotional speech, children’s speech, speech perception, cross-language studies.